

The Marshall Islands

Prepared February 2001

1. Per USCINCPACINST 6200.2, Commanders are responsible for an effective Force Health Protection Plan for personnel deploying to locations within the USCP AOR, ensuring implementation of the Plan, for appointing a FHP Officer and assistant who will serve as the Commander's focal point for the planning, coordination, and execution of "real world" force health protection planning for a specific deployment. This is applicable to all assigned and attached personnel, all Department of Defense personnel performing official duties within locations in the AOR, and all U.S. contractor personnel employed directly by the DOD in locations in the AOR.

2. FHP Planning must include the following elements:

a. Health Threat Assessment. This assessment must evaluate known and anticipated health threats/hazards (including endemic diseases, injuries, industrial toxins, and climatic extremes) and the appropriate countermeasures to be taken for each. Insect-borne illness which occur in Marshall Islands include: dengue fever, dengue hemorrhagic fever, and filariasis. Food-borne and water-borne diseases such as the diarrheal diseases occur.

b. Health Record and Readiness Screening. Performed prior to deployment. Items identified for screening include: immunizations, HIV testing, TB skin testing, DNA sample on file, current physical exam, dental class I or II, prescription medications on hand, and unresolved health problems (i.e., P-4 profile, limited duty, pregnancy, mental health, etc.) which could disqualify the Service member for deployment.

c. Health Threat Briefing. Must be performed prior to deployment. Attendance must be documented. Minimum contents of Health Threat Briefing for the Marshall Islands include the following material:

(1) Immunizations.

(a) Personnel must be up to date on all routine immunizations for personnel on deployable or mobility status (tetanus booster, hepatitis A, typhoid, influenza)

(b) Current influenza vaccine. Even if local flu season is past and new vaccine is not available yet.

(c) Special immunizations are not required.

(2) Chemoprophylaxis

(a) **Malaria chemoprophylaxis:** There is no malaria in the Marshall Islands. No chemoprophylaxis is required.

(3) **Tuberculosis:** All service members should have a PPD done (results must be recorded) within twelve months prior to deploying. A follow-up PPD should be done approximately 3 months after returning.

(4) **Personal Protective Measures.**

The most important personal protective measures against insect-borne diseases (dengue and filariasis) are avoiding vector exposure as much as possible, and using appropriate insect repellent and properly worn permethrin-treated BDU or other treatable long-sleeve uniform.

- (a) **Avoid exposure to mosquitoes, if possible.** *Aedes* spp. (dengue) are primarily daytime feeders, and both indoors and outdoors.
- (b) **33% extended-duration DEET** (NSN 6840-01-284-3982) or an equivalent should be applied to all exposed skin surfaces 30 minutes before potential exposure and should be reapplied every four to six hours, especially if there is significant sweating. When using both DEET and sunscreen, DEET should be applied approximately 30 minutes before the sunscreen. Be aware that the effectiveness of the sunscreen will be decreased by approximately 35% due to the inactivating effects of the DEET. For that reason, sunscreen with SPF 45 is recommended. Sunscreen should not be applied first since that may decrease the effectiveness of the DEET.
- (c) **Permethrin treatment of uniforms and bed nets** before departure (preferably with permethrin concentrate/compressed air sprayer technique, which lasts the life of the uniform).
- (d) **Sleep under a permethrin-treated bed net** with the edges tucked in under the bedding all around.

(4) Safe Food and Water.

- (a) Wash hands before eating.
- (b) If available consume only approved food and water. Otherwise:
- (c) Eat piping hot, freshly cooked food from reputable sources.
- (d) Eat no salads or fresh fruit/vegetables (except intact fruit which you wash and open yourself)
- (e) Eat no food from street vendors or stalls
- (f) Drink bottled or canned water/beverages only without ice
- (g) Biointoxication may occur from raw or cooked fish and shellfish.

(5) Sexually transmitted diseases. STDs are found in every area in the world and can be serious or FATAL (e.g., HIV, gonorrhea, hepatitis B).

- (a) Abstinence is the only perfectly safe practice and is recommended.
- (b) Barrier protection with latex condoms is the only other acceptable option (but can be just as dangerous in case of breakage).

(6) Motor Vehicle and General Safety.

- (a) Seat belts and caution in and around vehicles must be practiced.
- (b) General safety. Exercise caution in ALL activities to avoid injury of any type.

(7) Environmental Factors.

- (a) Heat injury. The climate in the Marshall Islands is tropical, with a mean annual temperature of 82°F (28°C). Injuries such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke must be prevented. Necessary precautions include drinking water frequently, on a schedule, to avoid dehydration; adhering to safe work-rest cycles during extreme conditions; and careful observation of teammates to detect warning signs of heat injury such as mental status changes and cessation of sweating.
- (b) Sun injury. Sun exposure can be intense. Wide-brimmed hats, long sleeves and trousers, and liberal use of sunscreen lotions

and lip protection with SPF 15 or greater are recommended precautions.

(8) Hazardous Plants and Animals.

(a) Rabies. Rabies is not present in the Marshall Islands.

(b) Marine life. Hazards to bathers include corals and jellyfish, poisonous fish, and sea snakes.

(9) Personal Health and Fitness. Try as much as possible to maintain a healthful regimen of hygiene and fitness. Regular bathing and frequent changes of undergarments, including socks, are important. When exercising outdoors, be aware that shorts and tank tops will make you more susceptible insect-borne diseases like dengue. Apply DEET to exposed skin prior to exercising outdoors.

(10) Other comments. The Republic of the Marshall Islands consists of two chains of coral atolls in the Central Pacific with a total area of approximately 705 square miles. The Republic of the Marshall Islands is a parliamentary democracy, constitutionally in free association with the United States of America.

3. Assistance with Health Threat Assessments, Health Threat Briefings, and countermeasures planning can be obtained from the following sources:

a. Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine Department, Tripler Army Medical Center, phone (DSN or 808)433-6693

b. Pacific Air Forces Public Health Officer, Hickam Air Force Base, phone (DSN or 808)449-2332, x269

c. Epidemiology Department, Navy Environmental and Preventive Medicine Unit 6, phone (DSN or 808)473-0555.